

Message Text

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10

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

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BEIRUT PLEASE PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, IZ, IR, US

SUBJ: SHOOTDOWN OF IRAQI PLANES BY IRAN

REFS: A. TEHRAN 10658; B. STATE 276313

1. IN RESPONSE TO IRAQI CHARGE THAT TWO OF ITS PLANES HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN BY IRANIAN MISSILES ON IRAQI SIDE OF BORDER (REF. A), OFFICIAL IRANIAN SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED DEC. 17 THAT IRANIAN FORCES DID SHOOT DOWN "TWO IRAQI PLANES SATURDAY" AND WARNED OF "SEVERE REACTION" IF IRAQI PLANES VIOLATE IRANIAN AIRSPACE AGAIN. WITHOUT SPECIFICALLY STATING THESE TWO PLANES HAD BEEN OVER IRANIAN TERRITORY WHEN HIT, GOI SPOKESMAN CLAIMED IRAQI PLANES HAD REPEATEDLY VIOLATED BORDER TO BOMB VILLAGES ON IRANIAN SIDE, CAUSING LOSS OF LIFE AND EXTENSIVE DAMAGE. SPOKESMAN EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT IRAQIS SHOULD PROTEST THIS DEFENSIVE ACTION TO PROTECT IRANIAN TERRITORY. HE SAID ORDERS HAD BEEN ISSUED TO IRANIAN ARMED FORCES TO REPLY WITH FORCE TO ANY IRAQI PROVOCATION OR VIOLATION OF IRAN'S AIRSPACE.

2. FARSI AND ENGLISH MORNING PRESS DEC 18 FRONT-PAGED GOI
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ANNOUNCEMENT. PERSIAN LANGUAGE RADIO HIGHLIGHTED ORDERS TO

COUNTER ANY IRAQI BORDER VIOLATIONS WITH FORCE, CLAIMING IRAN HAD RECEIVED "INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT" IN LONG HISTORY OF IRAQI AGGRESSION AGAINST IRANIAN TERRITORY, AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO UN COMMISSION WHICH INVESTIGATED BORDER INCIDENTS LAST WINTER. ONLY EDITORIAL THUS FAR IS EMOTIONAL PIECE IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE JOURNAL CONDEMNING "BA'ATHIST AGGRESSION" AND CLAIMING THAT "HAD IT NOT BEEN DUE TO COOL-HEADEDNESS OF IRANIAN AUTHORITIES, IRAQIS WOULD HAVE HAD TO FACE BRUNT OF IRANIAN FORCE LONG AGO."

3. UK JOURNALIST HOUSEGO TOLD EMBOFFS HE HAD TALKED WITH EYEWITNESS TO ONE SHOOTDOWN WHO CLAIMED PLANE WAS MAKING LOW-LEVEL PASS ON PESH MERGA POSITIONS ABOUT TWENTY KILOMETERS INSIDE IRAQ AND WAS BROUGHT DOWN BY HEAVY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE, NOT MISSILE. (COMMENT: EMBASSY IS NOT SURE OBSERVER WAS REFERRING TO LAST WEEKEND'S SHOOTDOWNS.) OBSERVER SAID HE SAW MANY PUFFS OF EXPLODING SHELLS NEAR PLANE BEFORE IT WAS HIT "IN NOSE" AND CRASHED.

4. EMBASSY PASSED TEXT OF DEPT SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS (REF B) TO MFA 4TH DIVISION CHIEF HATEF WHO NOTED FIRM DENIAL THAT HAWK MISSILES HAD BEEN USED WAS VERY HELPFUL. HATEF SAID UNDERSECRETARY TAJBAKSHAH HAD CONFIRMED SHOOTDOWN OF TWO PLANES. HELMS

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